

## 6 COORDINATION AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Involvement and participation by federal and state agencies, local public officials, and the general public was solicited for the development and direction of this project. This section describes the coordination and public involvement conducted throughout the MIS and EIS process. Tables 6-1, 6-2, and 6-3 contain a summary of information pertaining to the public meetings, public officials meetings, and agency meetings held for this project.

### 6.1 MAJOR INVESTMENT STUDY PROCESS

A Working Group for the MIS was formed of representatives from the following:

- 1) The cities and counties in the project area
- 2) The Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport Authority
- 3) The Federal Highway Administration
- 4) The Federal Transit Administration
- 5) The Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Commission
- 6) The Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department

This Group established public involvement procedures for the MIS process, and two public meetings were held to gather information from the public.

### 6.2 NEEDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT/SCOPING PROCESS

A total of 19 meetings were held as part of the DEIS/SDEIS public involvement process for this project; including two scoping meetings with state and federal resource agency representatives, eight with local public officials, seven public involvement or public hearings with the general public, and two neighborhood meetings. Information concerning these meetings is available in Tables 6-1, 6-2, and 6-3.

#### 6.2.1 Agency Coordination

The USACE and the USFWS expressed a desire to be cooperating agencies in the preparation of the environmental impact statement. Copies of cooperating agency letters and coordination can be found in Appendix O. Information concerning agency scoping and coordination meetings can be found in Table 6-1.

	Date	Location	Approximate Attendance
DEIS-Agency Scoping	July 1998	Little Rock	7
NWARA Coordination	December 1998	Highfill	25
NWARA Coordination	October 1999	Little Rock	20
NWARA Coordination	September 2000	Highfill	20
NWARA Coordination	November 2000	Little Rock	13
NWARA Coordination	April 2001	Little Rock	8
NWARA Coordination	October 2001	Little Rock	11
SDEIS-USFWS Coordination	December 2002	Conway	5
NWARA Coordination	February 2003	Little Rock	11
NWARA Coordination	January 2004	Little Rock	13

#### **6.2.2.1 Coordination with NWARA Access Road Project**

An ongoing series of coordination meetings were held with representatives of the NWARA Access Road project. The purpose of the meetings was to coordinate the development of and exchange information between the two projects. These meetings involved officials and consultants for the NWARA Access Road, FHWA representatives, and AHTD personnel and are listed in Table 6-1.

#### **6.2.2 Public Meetings**

Three methods were used to notify the public of meetings, 1) press releases to all area newspapers, radio stations and television stations, 2) legal notices and/or display ads in newspapers, and 3) a project newsletter. All public meetings offered the public the opportunity to be placed on the project mailing list. As each meeting was held or inquiries were received, names were added. The current list contains over 1,100 names. The newsletter and a web site were developed to make project information available to the public about the environmental impact study process and the evolution and status of the project.

All of the public meetings held for this project had a similar open house format. AHTD representatives were available to explain the displays and provide information. A flowchart presented a simplified outline of the overall project process. Exhibits with aerial photography and street map bases were utilized to demonstrate project-related information. Handouts were used to convey additional "take-home" information.

Comment sheets were used to encourage contributions from the public. They were designed to obtain information about and public response to the project. To encourage participation by citizens unable to attend the scheduled meetings, copies of the maps were provided to cities in the area. Aerial photography and map displays from the meetings were also available afterward at the local AHTD offices. Information concerning the Public Meetings can be found in Table 6-2.

#### **6.2.2.1 Hispanic Community Public Involvement**

In an effort to engage the Hispanic community in the public involvement process for the SDEIS, an AHTD Hispanic Public Involvement specialist met with some of the Hispanic community members of northwest Arkansas to determine the best way to reach the Hispanic community. After discussion with these local leaders, a public involvement meeting was held at the Jones Center for Families, a location convenient for the Hispanic community. The meeting date and time was carefully selected to avoid conflicts with local Hispanic events, and scheduled on a weekend so that conflicts with work times would be minimized.

The information presented was the same as that utilized at the other general public involvements, except that Spanish translations were used and Spanish-speaking personnel were available. A slide show presentation was also available in Spanish.

#### **6.2.3 Local Officials' Coordination**

Before each series of public meetings, invitations to both a Public Officials' Meeting and the public sessions were sent to mayors of cities, county judges, state legislative officials and others in the project area. The Public Officials' Meeting was held prior to the public sessions

and gave the local officials an opportunity to preview the information being shown to the public. Information concerning the Public Officials' Meetings can be found in Table 6-3.

	Date	Location	Approximate Attendance
Major Investment Study Process	October 1996	Greenland	30
	October 1996	Lowell	80
DEIS Corridor Study Public Involvement (PI) Meetings	July 1998	Springdale	251
	July 1998	Bethel Heights	166
	July 1998	Elm Springs	314
DEIS Alignment Study PI Meetings	August/Sept. 1999	Springdale	320
	August/Sept. 1999	Bethel Heights	206
	August/Sept. 1999	Elm Springs	227
Oak Ridge Homeowners Assoc. Neighborhood Meeting	October 2000	Springdale	35
DEIS Location Public Hearings	April 2002	Springdale	353
	April 2002	Lowell	214
	April 2002	Elm Springs	319
SDEIS Public Involvement Meetings	August 2003	Lowell	307
	August 2003	Springdale	302
SDEIS Hispanic Public Involvement Meetings	August 2003	Springdale	1
SDEIS Location Public Hearings	June 2004	Lowell	350
	June 2004	Springdale	554
Belmont Property Owners Assoc. Neighborhood Meeting	September 2004	Springdale	15
Western Terminus Public Involvement	September 2004	Elm Springs	148

#### **6.2.4 DEIS Review**

The USACE and USFWS, as cooperating agencies, reviewed and commented on a draft copy of the DEIS. The comments received as a result of that review are included in Appendix O.

	Date	Location	Approximate Attendance
DEIS-Scoping Process Local Officials	July 1998	Springdale	19
DEIS-Alignment Study Local Officials	August/Sept. 1999	Springdale	25
DEIS-City Coordination	September 2000	Springdale	6
DEIS-Metropolitan Planning Organization	September 2000	Fayetteville	50
DEIS-Local Officials	June 2001	Springdale	18
DEIS-Local Officials	April 2002	Lowell	21
SDEIS-Local Officials	August 2003	Lowell	27
SDEIS-Local Officials	June 2004	Springdale	6

Other reviewers included staff involved in preparing the NWARA Access Road DEIS, the Interdisciplinary Staff at the AHTD, and a Multi-disciplinary Staff at the Arkansas Division of the FHWA.

Copies of the final DEIS were delivered to federal and state agencies, U.S. and State legislators, local officials, and other applicable organizations. The distribution list can be found in Section 8 of the DEIS. Copies were also made available at the Springdale Public Library for public use, and the DEIS or an Executive Summary was made available upon request.

#### **6.2.5 DEIS Location Public Hearing-May 2003**

A DEIS Location Public Hearing was held to obtain formal comment on the draft environmental impact statement. Aerial photographs and maps were again used as exhibits to show the changes made to the alignment alternatives. Handouts were used to provide the public with an overview of the project and its history. A copy of the meeting handout, comment sheet, and a synopsis and analysis of the public meetings are found in Appendix A.

### **6.2.6 SDEIS Review**

The USACE and USFWS, as cooperating agencies, reviewed and commented on a draft copy of the SDEIS. The comments received as a result of that review are included in Section 7, Comment and Reply. Other reviewers included the Interdisciplinary Staff at the AHTD, and a Multi-disciplinary Staff at the Arkansas Division of the FHWA.

Copies of the final SDEIS were delivered to federal and state agencies, U.S. and State legislators, local officials, and other applicable organizations. The distribution list can be found in Section 8 of the SDEIS. Copies were also made available at the Springdale Public Library for public use, and the SDEIS or an Executive Summary was made available upon request.

### **6.2.7 SDEIS Public Hearing-June 2004**

A SDEIS Location Public Hearing was held to obtain formal comment on the supplemental draft environmental impact statement. Aerial photographs and maps were again used as exhibits to show the changes made to the alignment alternatives. Handouts were used to provide the public with an overview of the project and its history. A copy of the meeting handout, comment sheet, and a synopsis and analysis of the public meetings are found in Appendix A.

### **6.2.8 Western Terminus Public Involvement Meeting-September 2004**

A public meeting was held to obtain comment on a change to the western terminus of the preferred alternative. Aerial photographs and maps were used as exhibits to show the changes made to the western interchange with existing Hwy 412 and the proposed alignment shift south of Brush Creek Road. Handouts were used to provide the public with a small-scale map of the changes to the preferred alignment. A copy of the meeting handout, comment sheet, and a synopsis and analysis of these public involvement meetings are found in Appendix A.